



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12

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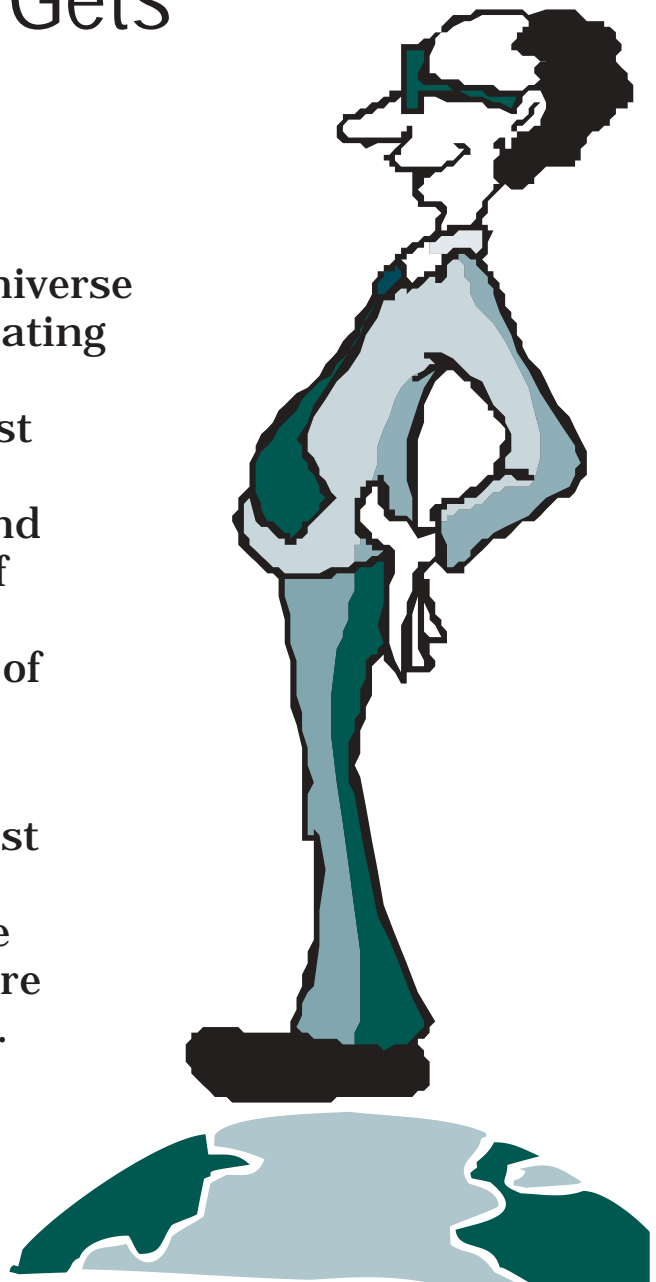
Good Posture: The Cure for What Gets You Down

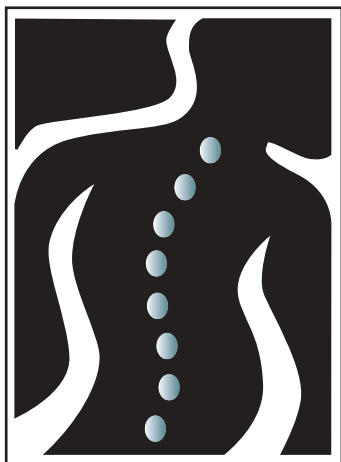
John E. Allen, Kinesiotherapist
North Chicago VAMC

Gravity is good for keeping the universe together. It also keeps us from floating around willy-nilly. But gravity is not your friend. Everyday the most powerful force in the universe is pulling us down, down, down...and here we are...a complex jumble of bones, muscles, nerves, etc., all balanced on two small feet. Most of us beat gravity pretty well all day long...or do we?

The people who do the best against gravity are the ones with good posture. They look better because they feel better and they have more energy at the end of the day. So...do you want to look better, feel better and have more energy? Sounds good to me!!

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How Does Poor Posture Affect Me?

Over time poor posture can damage your physical health.

It can cause:

- Arthritis—from the bones being out of line and uneven wear on the surfaces where the bones meet.
- Joint problems—if the bones don't line up right, the tendons and ligaments that support the joints stretch or shrink.
- A decrease in your blood circulation and less oxygen getting to your lungs.
- Internal organs that are cramped and not working well.
- Chronic aches and pains, which cause early aging, which can cause depression.

The cycle continues downward from there. Not a pretty picture!

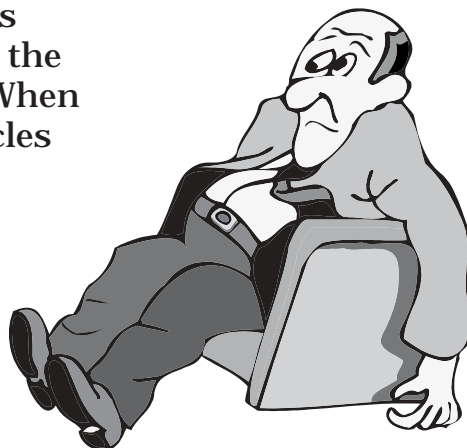
How Do I Look to Other People?

You remember the old saying that you cannot separate mind and body. We all have a movement personality that is closely linked to our psychological personality. Your friends can recognize you all the way down the block just from the way you walk and move. Your posture shows how you feel inside and everyone else can see it. Good relaxed posture projects confidence and vitality. What image do you want to project?? It's your choice!!

Got Energy...Especially at the End of the Day?

How often do you crash at the end of the workday, too tired to do something you enjoy? Good, relaxed posture throughout the day will save you energy. If your bones are aligned properly the muscles don't have to work so hard to hold you up. Have you ever had a sore neck or back after a lot of sitting at a desk doing paperwork or computer work? Your "not so perfect"

posture is probably the culprit. When the muscles have to work overtime they rebel.



How Can I Improve My Posture?

There is a simple way to achieve perfect posture. Here are the steps... (Remember, wherever the head goes the body follows).

1. Stand up.... or sit down if you have to.
2. Think about the top of your head, the peak of your skull, and draw a line from the top of your ears to this one point at the center.
3. Put one finger on that point, and rub lightly or push down lightly so that you can remember exactly where it is.
4. Bring your arm back down to your side.
5. Pretend that you are a puppet on a string or that a cable is attached to the exact spot that you were touching on top of your head.
6. Now pull up gently as if you are being suspended and supported by the string or cable.
7. Relax and inhale as you continue to feel taller and lighter. Your shoulders should roll slightly forward as they relax and your chest should pull up gently.

Try it a few times. If you feel discomfort or pain you are not doing it correctly. Stand, walk, sit, and move with this in mind and you can't go wrong. You will feel the difference!

To get the best results, you must make this new posture part of your daily life. It has taken years to get where you are, but it's never too late to make positive changes.

- Be aware of your posture. Every time you feel an ache or a pain check if your posture is "down." Change it!!
- Get support from your friends, family and co-workers. Tell the people around you the most to notice when you are "out of posture." Have them give you a simple cue "to pull up through the top." Old habits are not easy to change, so get others to help you.

The rewards of feeling better, looking better, and having more energy by doing something so simple is truly astonishing. You CAN do it!!

Source:

Feldenkrais Moshe. *Awareness Through Movement*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

HOME CARE CORNER

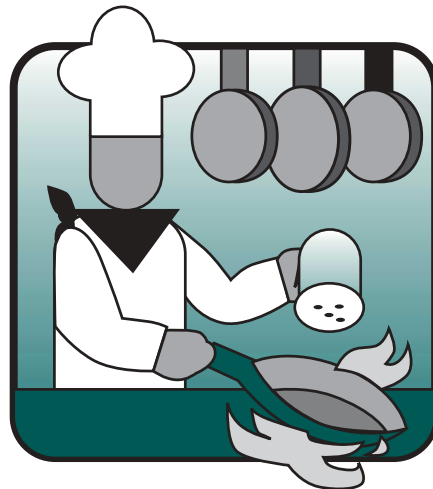
Trans Fats -- Why Should We Be Concerned?

Kathleen Kappel, RD,LD
Clinical Dietitian, Primary Care

What are Trans Fats?

Trans fats are made when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil. This creates a fat that is solid or more stable at room temperature. We now know that eating trans fats raises your LDL cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol). This increases your chance of getting heart disease.

By January 2006, trans fat information should be listed on all nutrition labels. Experts hope this new labeling will help prevent heart disease and save health care costs.



Where are Trans Fats Found?

They can be found in foods such as:

- ◆ Vegetable shortening
- ◆ Some margarine
- ◆ Crackers
- ◆ Candies
- ◆ Cookies
- ◆ Snack foods
- ◆ Fried foods
- ◆ Baked goods
- ◆ Salad dressings
- ◆ Other processed foods.



Where Can I Find Trans Fat Information on the Food Label?

You will find trans fat listed directly under the line for saturated fat, on the food label. Reading this information will help you make healthy food choices and is a start in reducing your chance for heart disease.

Nutrition Facts Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings per Container 2 Calories 120 Fat Cal. 20 <small>*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.</small>	Amount/Serving	% DV*	Amount/Serving	% DV*
	Total Fat 8g	3%	Total Carb. 26g	0%
	Sat Fat 5g	5%	Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
	<i>Trans</i> Sat Fat 2g		Sugars 1g	
	Cholest. 10mg	3%	Protein 5g	
	Sodium 780mg	8%		
	Vitamin A 0 % • Vitamin C 0% • Calcium 15% • Iron 8%			

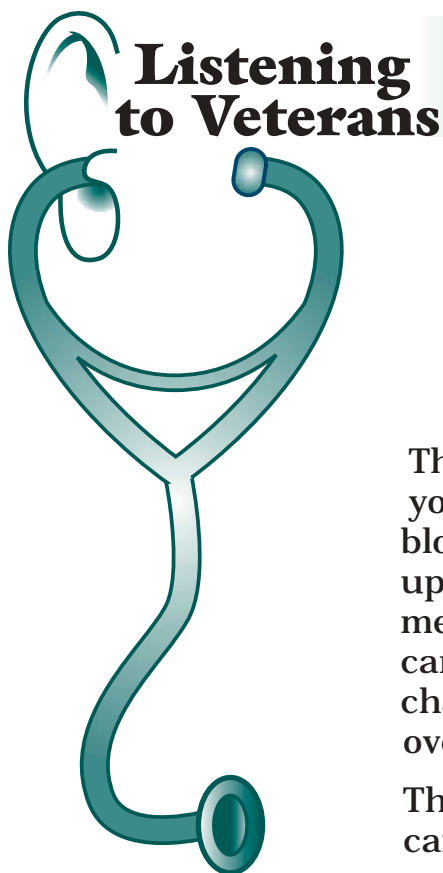
How Much Trans Fat is Too Much?

No one knows for sure. What we do know is LESS is BETTER. Trans fat is not essential to any healthy diet. The less saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol you eat, the better for your health.

Some helpful tips:

- ◆ Check the ingredient list on the food label for words like “shortening,” “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” or “hydrogenated vegetable oil.” These words tell you the item will have trans fats.
- ◆ In a restaurant, ask what kind of fat is being used to prepare your food. Ask to have your food cooked in canola oil or olive oil.

For more information on trans fat see: www.fda.gov/
or www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/labtr.html



ASK AN EXPERT

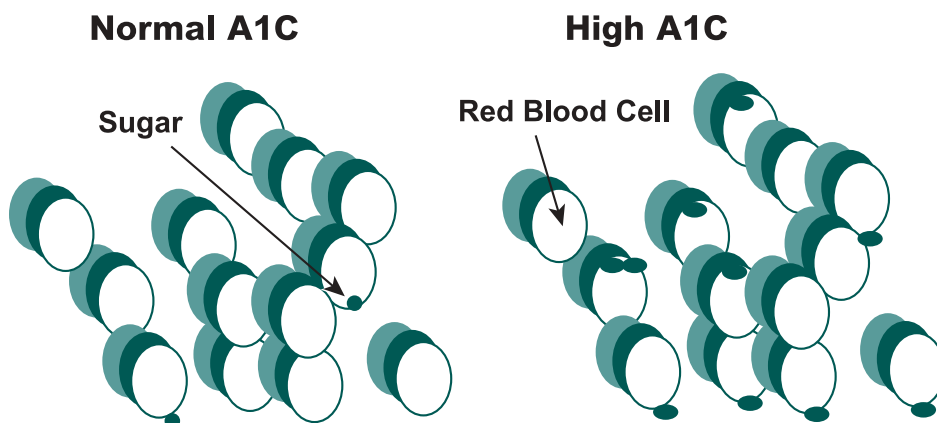
“What is an A1C Test? What is It For?”

The A1C test is an important tool for managing your diabetes. If you are like most people, your blood sugar (also called blood glucose) levels go up and down. They change with diet, exercise, medicines, or when you are ill. Blood sugar checks can show you the effects of medicine and lifestyle changes. But can you tell how you are doing overall with diabetes control?

The A1C is a NON-FASTING blood test. The A1C can give you a fairly accurate picture of what your blood sugars have been averaging for the last two to three months! Think of this test as a barometer for diabetic management. Your provider will tell you how often you need this test.

How Does It Work?

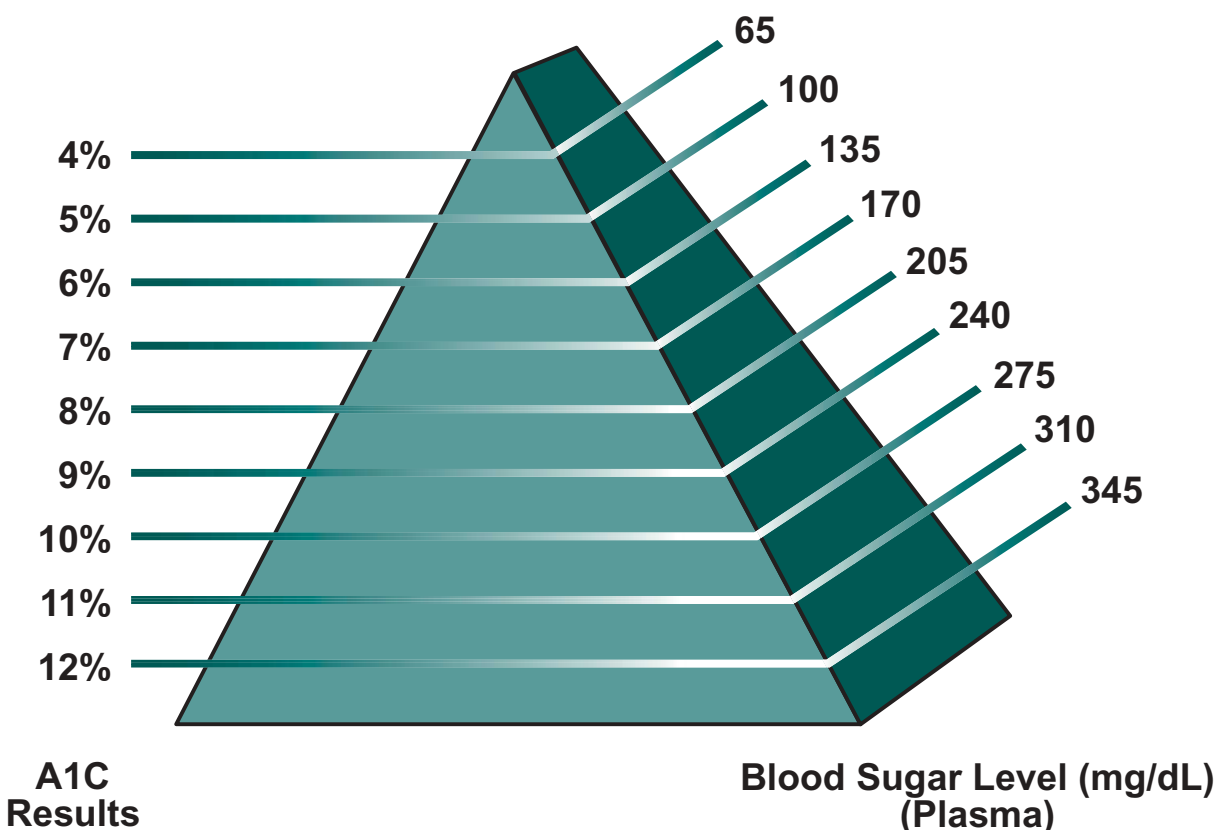
Blood cells live for about two to three months. The A1C test measures the amount of glucose (sugar) attached to your red blood cells. A person with diabetes will have more glucose attached to the blood cells than a person who does not have diabetes.



So What Does This Number Really Mean?

You should get the results of your A1C test a week or so after the lab draw. The normal A1C range for someone without diabetes is 4-6%. Most diabetics should try to keep their A1C below 7%.

Find your A1C on this chart. Compare that to the blood glucose number across from the A1C. (Example: If your A1C is about 8%, your average blood sugar is 180).



Remember this chart is only a guideline! Talk to your provider about using your A1C number in planning your diabetic goals.

Answered by:
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Source:
Diabetes Care. February 2004;27: (S15-35)

Your best source for information on your health will always be your doctor or health care provider. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to talk to your health care provider and ask questions about your health concerns.

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or Idea for Future Articles**

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